

William E. Aytoun (1813-65)

1 *The Burial-March of Dundee*

I.

Sound the fife, and cry the slogan —  
    Let the pibroch shake the air  
With its wild triumphal music,  
    Worthy of the freight we bear.  
Let the ancient hills of Scotland 5  
    Hear once more the battle-song  
Swell within their glens and valleys  
    As the clansmen march along!  
Never from the field of combat,  
    Never from the deadly fray, 10  
Was a nobler trophy carried  
    Than we bring with us to-day —  
Never, since the valiant Douglas  
    On his dauntless bosom bore  
Good King Robert's heart — the priceless — 15  
    To our dear Redeemer's shore!  
Lo! we bring with us the hero —  
    Lo! we bring the conquering Græme,  
Crowned as best beseems a victor  
    From the altar of his fame; 20  
Fresh and bleeding from the battle  
    Whence his spirit took its flight,  
'Midst the crashing charge of squadrons,  
    And the thunder of the fight!  
Strike, I say, the notes of triumph, 25  
    As we march o'er moor and lea!  
Is there any here will venture  
    To bewail our dead Dundee?  
Let the widows of the traitors  
    Weep until their eyes are dim! 30



On his war-horse black as night —  
 Well the Cameronian rebels  
 Knew that charger in the fight! —  
 And a cry of exultation  
 From the bearded warriors rose; 70  
 For we loved the house of Claver'se,  
 And we thought of good Montrose.  
 But he raised his hand for silence —  
 "Soldiers! I have sworn a vow:  
 Ere the evening star shall glisten 75  
 On Schehallion's lofty brow,  
 Either we shall rest in triumph,  
 Or another of the Græmes  
 Shall have died in battle-harness  
 For his Country and King James! 80  
 Think upon the Royal Martyr —  
 Think of what his race endure —  
 Think of him whom butchers murdered  
 On the field of Magus Muir: —  
 By his sacred blood I charge ye, 85  
 By the ruined hearth and shrine —  
 By the blighted hopes of Scotland,  
 By your injuries and mine —  
 Strike this day as if the anvil  
 Lay beneath your blows the while, 90  
 Be they covenanting traitors,  
 Or the brood of false Argyle!  
 Strike! and drive the trembling rebels  
 Backwards o'er the stormy Forth;  
 Let them tell their pale Convention 95  
 How they fared within the North.  
 Let them tell that Highland honour  
 Is not to be bought nor sold,  
 That we scorn their prince's anger  
 As we loathe his foreign gold. 100  
 Strike! and when the fight is over,  
 If ye look in vain for me,

Where the dead are lying thickest,  
Search for him that was Dundee!"

III.

Loudly then the hills re-echoed 105  
With our answer to his call,  
But a deeper echo sounded  
In the bosoms of us all.  
For the lands of wide Breadalbane,  
Not a man who heard him speak 110  
Would that day have left the battle.  
Burning eye and flushing cheek  
Told the clansmen's fierce emotion,  
And they harder drew their breath;  
For their souls were strong within them, 115  
Stronger than the grasp of death.  
Soon we heard a challenge-trumpet  
Sounding in the Pass below,  
And the distant tramp of horses,  
And the voices of the foe: 120  
Down we crouched amid the bracken,  
Till the Lowland ranks drew near,  
Panting like the hounds in summer,  
When they scent the stately deer.  
From the dark defile emerging, 125  
Next we saw the squadrons come,  
Leslie's foot and Leven's troopers  
Marching to the tuck of drum,  
Through the scattered wood of birches,  
O'er the broken ground and heath, 130  
Wound the long battalion slowly  
Till they gained the plain beneath;  
Then we bounded from our covert. —  
Judge how looked the Saxons then,  
When they saw the rugged mountain 135  
Start to life with armèd men!  
Like a tempest down the ridges



Open wide the hallowed portals  
    To receive another guest!  
Last of Scots, and last of freemen —  
    Last of all that dauntless race,  
Who would rather die unsullied 175  
    Than outlive the land's disgrace!  
O thou lion-hearted warrior!  
    Reck not of the after-time:  
Honour may be deemed dishonour,  
    Loyalty be called a crime. 180  
Sleep in peace with kindred ashes  
    Of the noble and the true,  
Hands that never failed their country,  
    Hearts that never baseness knew.  
Sleep! — and till the latest trumpet 185  
    Wakes the dead from earth and sea,  
Scotland shall not boast a braver  
    Chieftain than our own Dundee!

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